DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 471 283 PS 030 724

AUTHOR	Seligson, Michelle; MacPhee, Marybeth
TITLE	The Relevance of Self at Work: Emotional Intelligence and Staff Training in After-School Environments. Working Paper Series.
INSTITUTION	Wellesley Coll., MA. Center for Research on Women.; Wellesley Coll., MA. Stone Center for Developmental Services and Studies.
REPORT NO	WP-402
PUB DATE	2001-00-00
NOTE	22p.; Written for the Bringing Yourself to Work: Caregiving in After School Environments Project. Funded by the Gioconda and Joseph King Foundation and the Pamela and Hunter Boll Foundation.
AVAILABLE FROM	Center for Research on Women, Wellesley College, 106 Central Street, Wellesley, MA 02481-8203. Tel: 781-283-2501; Web site: http://www.wcwonline.org.
PUB TYPE	Information Analyses (070) -- Opinion Papers (120)
EDRS PRICE	EDRS Price MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Adult Child Relationship; After School Education; *After School Programs; *Child Caregivers; Cultural Influences; *Emotional Intelligence; *Interpersonal Competence; Interpersonal Relationship; Professional Development; Reflective Teaching; School Age Child Care; *Staff Development; Teacher Administrator Relationship; *Work Attitudes
IDENTIFIERS	Relational Understanding; *Self Awareness

ABSTRACT

Afterschool programs supplement students' academic preparation, provide adult supervision when parents are working, and provide an opportunity for adult social and emotional growth. This paper examines how adult educators in these programs can mobilize their inner resources and social-emotional aptitude to achieve good relationships with their co-workers and with the children in their care. Findings of the Bringing Yourself to Work Project, a professional development program for afterschool educators at Wellesley College, provides an empirical foundation for the relevance of emotional intelligence and relational psychology at work. The paper discusses issues of self-awareness, cultural boundaries, and the potential for adults to learn relational skills. (Contains 66 references.) (Author/KB)

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The Relevance of Self at Work: Emotional Intelligence and Staff Training in After-School Environments

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The Relevance of Self at Work: Emotional Intelligence and Staff Training in After-School Environments

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This paper was written for the Bringing Yourself to Work: Caregiving in After School Environments Project of the Center for Research on Women at Wellesley Centers for Women. The project is directed by Michelle Seligson and Associate Director Patricia Jahoda Stahl. Funding for the project was provided by the Gioconda and Joseph King Foundation, The Pamela and Hunter Boll Foundation, and an anonymous foundation. The authors wish to thank Katie Wheeler, Mary Casey, and Jennifer Ekert for their work as consultants to the Project in 1999 and their contributions to a review of the literature, which greatly informed and enriched this paper.

Suggested citation:

Seligson, M., & MacPhee, M. (2001). *The relevance of self at work: Emotional intelligence and staff training in after-school environments.* (Center for Research on Women at Wellesley Centers for Women Working Paper No. 402). Wellesley, MA: Wellesley Centers for Women.

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Abstract

In recent years, after-school programs have emerged as an important resource for child development. In addition to their role in supplementing academic preparation and providing supervision when parents are working, after-school programs also offer an opportunity for social and emotional growth. This paper examines how adult educators in these programs can mobilize their inner-resources and social-emotional aptitude to achieve good relationships with their co-workers and with the children in their care. The Bringing Yourself to Work Project, a professional development program for after-school educators at Wellesley College provides an empirical foundation for the relevance of emotional intelligence and relational psychology at work. The authors discuss issues of self-awareness, cultural boundaries, and the potential for adults to learn relational skills.

The Relevance of Self at Work: Emotional Intelligence and Staff Training in After-School Environments

INTRODUCTION

"Dave"[1] is the director of a large after-school and summer program for school-age children living in a diverse metropolitan center. He is a wizard at creating a safe haven for children who live in poverty and face violence in their neighborhoods, schools, and homes. Dave's ability to let each child in the program know that he cares about them magically transforms a less-than-ideal facility into a sanctuary. What makes Dave so unique in his patient, loving approach to the children in his program? Dave's father was very strict, and pushed him hard to succeed. Dave and his siblings weren't allowed to express much emotion in the family. Even so, Dave found the structure he experienced as he was growing up to be helpful when he started working with kids because having clear boundaries gave them a sense of safety. But he discovered something he didn't know he had—his own nurturing ability, perhaps derived from his own longing for a more connected relationship with his Dad.

Shioban took her job in another after-school program because of the immediate connection she made with her supervisor, the program's executive director. In the job interview, Mary, the supervisor, asked Shioban about herself and what she had done in her life that prepared her to work with kids. Shioban felt immediately "heard" and knew that their working relationship in the program would be based on their similar values about what was important for the children. As this relationship grew through dealing with day-to-day issues, the two women developed a strong trust. Shioban never felt judged by Mary. They both learned from each other. Their relationship is critical to the reason she stays at the program, and Shioban is not sure that the values they share would be maintained by the larger organization if Mary were to leave.

Many people think that Dave and Shioban's social and emotional skills are innate — you either have them or you don't — but Goleman's (1995) "Emotional Intelligence" theory argues that anyone can learn these skills with the right training and support[2]. The core concept of emotional intelligence is the ever-emerging process of self-awareness, where individuals are able to identify their emotions and manage them in various social environments (Weisinger 1998). We view this capacity as an asset in childcare because new insights in human development have highlighted the importance of children's social and emotional development and the process through which it helps them learn. As individuals grow and develop from infancy to adolescence and into adulthood, they enter and experience the world in terms of relationships[3]. Through relationships with parents and primary caregivers, infants, toddlers and pre-schoolers learn the meaning of self and the value of self-regulation, an important part of social and emotional competence. On the negative end, a national committee on child mental health argues that "children who do not achieve these age-appropriate social and emotional milestones face a far greater risk for early school failure." (Child Mental Health Foundations and Agencies Network 2000).

Expanding this perspective to older children, research and practice in psychology (Brown & Gilligan, 1992, Miller & Stiver 1997, Rogers 1993, Taylor, Gilligan, & Sullivan 1995) and education (Cohen 1999, Jones & Jones 1998, Krueger 1998, Pianta 1999) have argued that adult caregivers

contribute to children's social and emotional needs, along with their physical needs, by engaging in quality interpersonal relationships. Identifying the characteristics of quality relationships for older children and youth, however, remains a challenge. Adults can enhance a child's self-esteem, foster social competence, and help to build academic skills, but some researchers maintain that the ideal way to achieve these goals is elusive, idiosyncratic and almost impossible to evaluate. Although empirical evidence clearly documents that children do better psychologically when they have at least one supportive relationship with an adult, Spencer contends that "we do not know *how* these relationships produce such significant effects," (Spencer 2000: 1).

This paper examines empirical and theoretical insights into how adults mobilize their inner resources and social-emotional aptitude to achieve good relationships with their co-workers and with the children and youth in their care. What are the magic ingredients that help Dave connect with vulnerable kids and Shioban connect with her supervisor? And more importantly, how can other care-givers learn these life skills? The integrative approach to professional development embedded in these questions forms the heart of the Bringing Yourself to Work project based at the Center for Research on Women at Wellesley College. The project focuses on training educators in self-awareness and relational practices to foster positive social-emotional learning environments for children. The theoretical foundation of this approach rests on increasing empirical and anecdotal evidence that success in life and in work is deeply connected with what Goleman (1998) calls "emotional literacy" with its five core aspects: self-awareness, the ability to handle emotions, self-motivation, empathic capacities, and social skills.

In the work setting, Goleman contends that human contact is more essential than technology in accounting for success in business. In his book, *Working with Emotional Intelligence* (1998:330), he cites the wry observation of one reviewer of training trends: "It is often the mundane and low technology factors of a training system that make the difference between a successful training program and wasted organizational resources." The Bringing Yourself to Work Project builds on Goleman's view that among these low-tech factors are people with emotional intelligence. The following sections link empirical examples from pilot research and training sessions with after-school program directors in Massachusetts to highlight the relevance of self at work. Defining "self" is a complex task and beyond the scope of this paper, but we situate our working definition within the scope of relational psychology where one's sense of agency and place in the world develops from present and past relationships[4]. After introducing the socio-political context of after-school programs in the United States, we discuss how the relational competence of childcare workers contributes to positive social and emotional environments for youth. Relational competence in childcare requires an awareness of self as an individual, a co-worker, and as a role model for children. As such, we contextualize our discussion of self-awareness within the boundaries of the after-school work setting. Finally, we offer a rationale for how educators can learn Emotional-Intelligence.

After-School: Rational and Relational Views

> "We all know that how we feel about ourselves and others can profoundly affect our ability to concentrate, to remember, to think, and to express ourselves. Many educators appreciate that we simply cannot separate "academics" from the social and emotional lives of the classroom and the

> student....Optimally, social and emotional learning (SEL) needs to be an integral part of children's education, in conjunction with linguistic, mathematical, aesthetic, kinesthetic, and ethical learning...." (Cohen 1999)

The topic of school-age childcare has been a national concern since the late 1970s when a significant number of mothers began to work full-time outside the home (Seligson & Allenson, 1993). Only recently has the after-school program been seen as an educational supplement. Policy-makers in Massachusetts, for example, have targeted after-school programs as an opportunity to provide extra help and tutoring for children who have performed poorly on standardized tests or whose academic skills fall far short of grade level (Mayor's Task Force 2000). State by state, legislators are enacting educational standards largely predicated upon economic concerns about the critical and technological competence of the labor force in the coming century. Parents, on the other hand, have broader concerns about the quality of after-school program:

> Is it interesting and will it hold my child's attention?
>
> Will my child be safe when I am not there to supervise?
>
> Will my child feel comfortable, respected, listened to, and liked?

Embedded in these questions are concerns about how staff and curriculum address the individual needs of the child. While physical safety and nutrition lie on the concrete end of the quality spectrum, the elusive area of adult-child relationships make or break the success of the program, whether it is a private program in a wealthy suburb or a publicly funded program in the inner city. The social and emotional climate of a program contributes to the degree to which kids feel interested, safe, and respected as well as able to concentrate and learn, as Cohen points out above.

In a study comparing low-income children in different types of after-school care, Posner and Vandell (1994) found that attendance in formal after-school programs was associated with better academic achievement and social adjustment, compared to less formal types of after-school care (i.e., mother care, minimal adult supervision, and self-care). Critical for our purposes is the finding that children's academic and conduct grades were positively associated with time spent in one-on-one academic work with an adult, whereas these outcomes were negatively associated with time spent in unsupervised, unorganized activities.

This finding modifies "rational" views of after-school programs that focus on their role in crime prevention and supporting welfare reform. Proponents of this argument suggest that the likelihood of student success in school increases through their involvement in a safe, structured environment outside of school[5]. Although this trend supports the desire to assist mothers in continuous employment, the quality of these programs varies tremendously (Seligson 1999).

The literature on childcare and after-school programs has identified components critical to developing and sustaining an effective program. These elements range from articulating a clear mission statement to securing adequate funding; identifying strong support in the form of "school partners"; ensuring a solid curriculum; hiring and retaining competent staff; addressing legal concerns; and providing for reliable assessment of program goals (O'Connor, et al, 1996; Seligson & Allenson, 1993). In 1996, the School-Age Child Care Project (now the National Institute on Out-

of-School Time) developed a five-step self-study guide to aid programs in "Assessing School-Age Quality" (ASQ). Of the six main areas of quality outlined in the manual, human relationships ranks as the most essential component of a successful program (O'Connor, et al, 1996). As Jones and Nimmo (1994:3) point out, it is not the activities or the building which provide the magic formula for quality, the magic is in the staff and the kids.

The field of youth development has championed "relational" perspectives in its emphasis on the staff's capacity to connect with the youth (e.g., Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development 1993, Krueger 1998). The presence of a supportive relationship with at least one adult makes a difference in the struggle to manage the social and emotional challenges at this stage (Gilligan 1989, Meehan et al 1993, Pianta 1999, Sarason et al 1983). Now practitioners in the child development field argue that it is important to establish these relationships before children reach adolescence. Young children thrive when sensitive, responsive care-givers provide generous amounts of attention as well as verbal and cognitive stimulation. Furthermore, the research shows that the combination of stability and skill create the basis of quality in childcare (Shonkoff and Phillips 2000:315, Belle 1997).

Similarly, Renee Spencer (2000:15) has found that skill and stability play a role in prevention programs. Adults who have "long-lasting and committed relationships" with youth in their communities bring care, trust, love, and acceptance into troubled environments. More than the format or content of the intervention message, the leadership of a single adult made the program work successfully[6]. In research on adult youth workers in inner-city United States, McLaughlin and her colleagues (1994:3-4, cited in Spencer 2000:15-16) observed that "it was less what the leaders did, and more the way they did it that seemed to have such a significant impact." Successful youth leaders in the study emphasized the potential of the youth and the program to become resources for the community. More importantly, the leaders saw themselves as part of the community and learned from the youth in a joint effort to make a difference.

Some educators have innate leadership skills, while others can develop such skills with the kind of connection and support Shioban and Mary were able to develop in their program. As we show in the next section, successful after-school programs build into the program design opportunities for staff to reflect on what leads them to work with children and how those motivations affect their relationships with children.

Mobilizing Inner Resources and Self-Awareness

In conducting visits to six after-school programs in Massachusetts during pilot research[7] in 1998-1999, we found that programs that emphasize the personal development of adult educators have a more positive social-emotional climate than those that do not address adult development issues.[8] One of the participating after-school programs that work with adolescents provides a useful working example of what we mean by positive social-emotional climate. This multicultural program that serves 40 adolescent girls focuses on relationships. Because relationships are central to the program structure, adults create and take advantage of opportunities to talk with youth about personal matters one-on-one or in small groups. The adults share their own lives, passions, and interests. When staff break down the power dynamics that often exist between adults and youth, the teens can take a more active role in planning and implementing activities and this

kind of participation offers opportunities for social and emotional learning and growth.

On the day we first visited this program, the staff and youth invited us to join their sharing "circle." The activity often begins with a "body scan" where each participant brings her attention to feelings and tensions in her body and then shares those feelings with the group. The lack of hierarchy between staff and youth is remarkable and the teens say that this sense of community makes them feel comfortable and supported in the program. One teen called the sharing circle 'her savior": "I express myself, sometimes by crying, sometimes by side-splitting laughter. It feels good — no matter what it is, it feels really good." The teens are able to build relationships with the staff as much as other teens because the participants have learned how to share parts of their inner selves with the group. Amy's remarks help to illustrate how self-awareness and relational skills among staff make a difference in children's lives:

> They (the staff) don't have authority over us. It's not them and us — it's all us. They share what they are feeling and what's happening in their lives with us. It's nice to know that adults have feelings, too. Most adults never talk honestly about how their day went. They don't say how they feel about things.

Caren, one of the staff leaders pointed out later that the teens are sensitive about feeling judged and the program tries to provide a sanctuary from the kinds of pressures they face with grades at school or performance in sports or with peers. Staff have been able to facilitate this safe environment because they participate in adult sharing circles where they discuss memories of their own adolescence and issues that affect their capacity to help the girls. The staff know themselves and each other as individuals with strengths and weaknesses, fears and troubles, before they interact with the teens. This high level of relational awareness allows educators to better understand how differences in cultural background, communication styles, gender identity, and interest play out and how best to facilitate understanding across these differences.

The emphasis on authenticity and empathy helps group leaders create a sense of community and psychological safety for both the staff and the youth. Even when emotionally difficult issues arise — whether they concern a fight at school, abuse at home, or an unexpected pregnancy — staff leaders can be effective role models because they know how their own feelings and experience contribute to the energy of the group. When staff feel validated, supported, and connected, they can more readily help children feel validated, supported, and connected.[9]

Developmental studies of adolescent girls identifies adolescence as a time when girls experience a "crisis of connection" (Gilligan, 1989). New sources of conflict and struggle enter into their relationships, particularly with people in authority. Relationships that were once loving and supportive can suddenly feel superficial, risky, and even dangerous for girls as they enter adolescence. For example, research suggests that girls who once expressed themselves with confidence in a range of relationships may come to question whether or not those relationships welcome their honesty in the same way (Rogers, Brown, & Tappan, 1994). Further, those girls who continue to speak out, despite social conventions that impose a particular kind of feminine politeness, often get tagged as loud and disruptive trouble-makers (Fine, 1992; Steiner-Adair, 1991; Taylor, Gilligan, & Sullivan, 1995). As a result, some girls learn to censor themselves as a way of staying connected to important people in their lives, afraid that speaking up will damage

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relationships or compromise their image in the eyes of others who are important to them (Stern, 1991).

Girls' development research makes a compelling case that it is only in trusting, intimate relationships that girls (and potentially boys too, although research on boys' development from a relational perspective has not yet been done) come to know themselves as individuals with feelings and desires that deserve expression. In this framework, the task of adolescence, traditionally understood as separation and individuation (Elliot & Feldman, 1990), is re-framed as a complex process of negotiating an autonomous self within intimate connections.

Creating connections across generations requires both self-awareness and other-awareness, or empathy. Giano and Tronick's (1988) research on infant-caregiver interaction suggests that early relationships contribute to positive psychological development not only when complimentary communication exchanges occur, but also when the pair can successfully repair mismatches. Miller and Stiver (1997) take up this theme in their examination of "healing connections" in psychotherapy. They see empathy and mutuality as essential components in maintaining emotional connections even when miscommunication occurs. Relational psychologists argue that individuals have an innate drive for human connection, but because problems linked to miscommunication have painful results, we protect ourselves by avoiding future connections. The freedom to express authentic emotions in balanced social relationships, conversely, allows individuals to thrive psychologically.

As the lens of developmental psychology widens to include relational capacity as a foundational part of human development, relationships are elevated as critical resources for growth and as the starting point for all educational endeavors (Wheeler, 1997). Projects such as the Reach Out to Schools Project (Wellesley College Stone Center), Educators for Social Responsibility, and Wellesley College Center for Research on Women's SEED (Seeking Educational Equity and Diversity) seminars aim to teach social competency through curriculum, but the embodied experience of connection serves as the most powerful tool for learning this approach. Knowledge of connection comes from gut feelings as much as verbal signals of understanding.

Emotions at Work: Self-Awareness and Cultural Boundaries

After-school programs are well-suited for the work of social and emotional development because relationships between adults and children are less formal and task-oriented than they are during the school day. In past centuries social and emotional learning occurred at home for many children. The advent of the Industrial Revolution, however, shifted the nature of home life and raised questions about the changing role of schools. Ruth Martin (1992:45) sees the central concern about school historically as a matter of the moral socialization of children as citizens and future members of the labor force. Like Dewey and Montessori, Martin recognizes the need to bring the lessons of the domestic sphere into the school, but she updates this view with caution. What happens when the state dictates "home" values and standardizes meaning for a society as diverse as ours? School curriculum is just beginning to integrate non-white, working class, and female contributions to literature, history, and society. Respecting the variety of views about social and emotional competency is even more complex in a multi-cultural setting. How can non-parental caregivers integrate social values into after-school programs while respecting the

diverse cultural perspectives of the staff and the clients?

One site director involved in the Bringing Yourself to Work project remarked that he had difficulty "getting through" to some of his teachers whose ideas about teaching and disciplining children diverge from the program model. He felt frustrated by their resistance to his view about how children learn, no matter how often he explained it. He finally fired two staff-teachers for this reason, which left him short-handed and scrambling to fill their positions.

Another site director noticed that her staff had more difficulty working with children from troubled families. Concerned for the children she probed the staff members to understand the nature of this tension and she discovered that many of them had experienced trauma in their early lives. The children in the program re-stimulated these feelings but the staff had no opportunity to reflect on the association or to suggest that a co-worker would be better suited in caring for particular children. In this case, the director's probing questions increased the self-awareness of her staff members in a way that illuminated emotional dynamics in the program and created an opportunity for enhancing their connection.

Although the second example describes a more relational approach to leadership, knowing about this past trauma puts the director in an awkward position. She faces the task of measuring the relevance of this information in terms of the work setting. What if the staff member wants to talk more about this past experience? Should the director tell other staff members or raise the issue in a staff meeting? She is not a therapist and staff meetings are not group therapy. Nevertheless, if framed with the appropriate level of disclosure for such a sensitive issue, other staff members may be more willing to adjust work responsibilities in support of their co-workers.

Integrating relational practices at work calls for a re-conceptualization of the structured roles of management and staff. Because the nature of these formerly hierarchical relationships in organizations has changed dramatically in recent years, an appeal for new paradigms of interpersonal relations at work has also grown. When industry leaders realized that the model of assembly lines and corporate hierarchy could not compete with the efficiency of Japanese team production, radical changes in organization theory developed out of insights (and advancements) in communication technology. The kind of systems thinking used in communications (and other sciences) replaced the linear, mechanical models of work that made sense in the past. Now organizations seek "flexible" workers willing to perform multiple tasks and take the risks necessary to help the company grow (Martin 1994). The emphasis on team work emerges from the "butterfly" notion that the contribution of any worker in the system, regardless of his or her level, can affect the efficiency of the entire company.

This major shift to systems thinking in American culture affects after-school environments in several ways, but the tools educators use to try to create quality programs are still linear and mechanical. Accreditation check-lists and activities curriculum still have a place in establishing a framework for this emerging profession, but they do not always communicate the underlying demand for flexibility in the day to day reality of childcare and youth work. Similar to the call for flexible office workers in companies like internet start-ups, after-school educators face shifting role boundaries and the need to perform multiple tasks as policies and parental concerns shift from concern with care and safety to

academic performance and discipline (and back again). After-school programs are often caught as a link in what Hirschhorn (1999) calls the "anxiety chain," where stress in one part of a larger system spreads to several other parts connected to it. Dave's awareness of the stress youth in his program experience at school and at home inspires his dedication to creating a safe haven in the after-school hours.

Dave's empathetic program design—with clear boundaries—can also help reduce tension for staff, who already face other kinds of work-related stress. After-school educators frequently perform their "flexible" roles in "flexible" workspace, such as converted school classrooms or cafeterias, and with a "flexible" work team. With the high rate of turnover in after-school programs staff must learn to quickly adjust to new co-workers and their communication and work styles. VanderVen (2000:120) sees the ability to understand complex systems as a vital asset in the management of young children's programs because directors must enact current theories of child development in concert with the capacity of the staff, parental values, and the children's interests.

According to Hirschhorn (1999), the kinds of demands that confront the way we historically have thought about work and role boundaries (e.g., between work and home or management and staff) have caused anxiety and its negative social defenses among workers. Increasingly, epidemiological studies reveal the health risks associated with the anxiety chain. At the same time that globalization and computer technology have enhanced the economic benefits of work, the media continually informs the public about links between stress and heart disease, cancer, depression, and suicide.
To understand the way emotional patterns in the work place contribute to stress, illness, and social problems, it is necessary to examine what emotions mean at work and how workers respond to those meanings. In multicultural contexts, the concept of Emotional Intelligence enters a tricky and sometimes frustrating territory. The meaning of feelings and emotional expressions changes from cultural to culture, and over time in one culture. Anthropologists (Abrahams 1986, Abu-Lughod 1985, Lutz 1988, Wikan 1987) have shown how culture and language shape both the experience and expression of emotion. The Balinese, for example, smile and act cheerful in response to suffering. "Managing the heart" prevents bad emotions from spreading to other people and causing sickness or confusion. Despite their calm mask, they see themselves as highly emotional (Wikan 1987).

This example serves to caution advocates of Emotional Intelligence that the ability to read the emotions of another cannot rely on intuition alone. Deborah Tannen (1986, 1994) has shown that even in the same culture men and women frequently misunderstand each other — not because we are inauthentic in our communication, but because people use different styles to communicate the same emotion. The speed, intonation, and pitch with which we speak add to the meaning of the words we use in communication. The trouble is that the styles are not uniform, even from family to family. Speaking in a loud voice is one person's cue for anger and another's normal speaking voice.

At a deeper level, the question of meaning has political implications in addition to the social ones listed above. The reason why Goleman's pairing of emotion and intelligence received so much attention in 1995 was that it contradicted the way western culture has conceptualized these two concepts since the 17th century. The legacy of Descartes' separation of mind and body for the

purposes of scientific inquiry is that scholars and the public have characterized emotion and intelligence as opposing forces. In the 19th century, early psychologists thought that women were unsuitable for intellectual work because their vulnerability to emotional hysteria (linked to the uterus) prevented rational thinking. To express emotion at work (even for a man) was to compromise any confidence in the workers rational abilities and could serve as a barrier to promotion.

Even though we are experiencing a shift in the way the culture thinks about emotion, the old associations of emotion with irrationality, vulnerability, and loss of control still linger. New research in neuroscience certainly lends credibility the assertions of psychologists, but the force of three hundred and fifty years of rationalism will not disappear overnight. Simply replacing the old model with a new relational model can make people uncomfortable and confused about their role vis-à-vis co-workers. An assistant program director involved in the Bringing Yourself to Work project worried that she did not feel qualified to take on the responsibility of her staff's emotional problems. Her concern underscores the importance of setting clear boundaries about which personal social and emotional issues are relevant to specific work contexts, keeping in mind that it is not always possible to predetermine where those boundaries lie. As Goffman (1959) insightfully pointed out over forty years ago, sometimes it is easier to simply interact with the uniform or the role rather than the whole person.

Learning Emotional Intelligence

To truly change the emotional climate of an organization, management must lead the way in setting new boundaries for the work role. Cooper and Sawaf (1998) argue that the key to successfully integrating the theory of emotional intelligence into everyday life is the issue of relevance. Indulging in excessive self-exploration would transform work into therapy and co-workers into amateur therapists. Suppressing self and feelings, on the other hand, can contribute to volatile work environments. Advocates for emotional intelligence in schools find a balance in proposing that educators should have time and space at work for self-reflection (Cohen 1999, Palmer 1998). Similarly, Poster and Neugebauer (2000:191) advocate social-professional support systems as a forum for advice, comfort, and a sense of context in an effort to prevent burnout among childcare workers. With the support of empathetic co-workers, educators are better able to recognize when emotion is controlling their actions — what Goleman (1997) calls an "emotional hijacking" — and they are able to learn how to channel that energy more creatively. When the adults are calm, they can teach children how to resolve their conflicts more responsibly (Lantieri & Patti 1996) and concentrate more effectively on their assignments (Cohen 1999, Pianta 1999).

Calmness, however, does not mean emotionless. The insights of relational psychology show that connections develop through empathy — feeling another person's pain or happiness and showing it. When the interaction involves children, the issue extends beyond creating an effective work environment. From infancy through adolescence, these connections or relationships have direct impact on children's development and their success in school and in life. For that reason, there is an emerging body of literature advising educators and youth workers that these connections are a fundamental part of their work. Jones and Jones (1998) advise teachers to bring warmth and caring into authentic dialogues with children. Krueger (1998) and Palmer (1998/1999)

invite adults to seize the moment when life issues emerge in class or during activities. Educators can share, according to their comfort level, feelings and stories to help children learn about the meaning and complexity of life in ways that objective academic lessons cannot.

The task of teaching and learning emotional, social, relational skills to create quality human relationships in after-school programs is an emergent and complex process. Relationships between staff members and between staff and children enact ideas about power, cultural values, styles of communication, and personal experience that are often tricky to negotiate. For this reason, the discussion of what constitutes high-quality relationships requires exploration beyond the kind of behavioral suggestions listed in best practice manuals. Poster and Neugebauer (2000:191) use the term "complex director" to describe leadership in "learning" childcare organizations. Leaders in this field integrate the kind of training required for state regulations with the kind of social and emotional training needed to create positive environments for staff and children. Research on Relational Psychology (Gilligan 1989, 1996, Jordan 1995, Miller & Stiver 1997), Emotional Intelligence (Goleman 1995) and social emotional learning (Cohen 1998) has introduced new possibilities for enhancing quality relationships through self-awareness, self-control, and empathic listening.

In other work settings, leaders of the new "flexible" organizations have turned to innovative training programs to avoid or at least diminish the effects of post-industrial anxiety. At one level, experientially oriented programs expose co-workers to contrived situations of risk, such as ropes courses or Outward Bound-like experiences. Martin (1994) finds that the goal of these programs is to familiarize participants with feelings of vulnerability and fear to encourage a coping response that involves mutual trust and interdependence among co-workers with different roles in the organization. The social and emotional skills needed to survive the extreme physical risk of the training retreat serve as a model for succeeding in the workplace.

Other organizations have turned to psychological experience training to achieve similar results. Emotional risk taking programs use reflective surveys and dyadic or group exercises to build the capacity for self-awareness, self-regulation, and emotional connections among participants. The Bringing Yourself to Work Training workshops, for example, engage after-school program directors in experiential dyads and reflective exercises that focus on interpersonal relations at work. Childre and Cryer (1999) and Cooper (1996) have measured the success of these interventions in terms of increased satisfaction at work, less anxiety, improved health of workers (e.g., lower blood pressure), and increased efficiency and production of work. According to Childre and Cryer, the first step is that individuals must learn tools for managing their mental and emotional processes. They offer an experiential exercise called "freeze frame" which combines the adoption of a neutral stance with biofeedback based on their theory of the heart as the seat of positive emotion. They ask individuals to focus their attention on the area around the heart and then to remember positive feelings in hope that they will contribute to relationship building and efficient problem solving at work. These kinds of skills could have heightened value in after-school programs because inter-staff relations model healthy communication and problem solving for children. The capacity to honestly listen to self and empathetically listen to others helps staff hear the essence of what children, co-workers, and parents need to improve the emotional climate of the program[10].

Conclusion

The assertion that social-emotional learning is a vital part of human development hinges on the hypothesis that cognitive, emotional, and behavioral development are interconnected processes that begin in infancy and continue throughout life. In fostering the emotional development of adults, the Bring Yourself to Work project complements other academic and professional training programs for after-school educators as well as school-based learning for children. At the root of theories in both relational psychology and social-emotional learning is a concern about how the weakening of community in modern American society affects individual development. With children and adults spending an enormous number of hours in front of the television and the computer (Miller et. al, 1996), the experience of belonging to a group or neighborhood and of identifying with local community—its values, its look, and its traditions—is fast becoming archaic. Like the corner store and the neighborhood school, the rearing of children in a constant set of relationships bounded by home and community is rapidly fading from view. Amidst all the changes children encounter as they grow and develop, the stability of these kinds of relational supports no longer can be taken for granted. Similarly, the work place has replaced the neighborhood as a primary source of community, but restrictions on appropriate behavior at work has limited the degree to which individuals can express self and achieve mutuality in this setting.

Sociologist George Herbert Mead (1967) maintains that an individual's sense of self is acquired and sustained over time as it is "reflected in the judgment of others, both real and imagined." In other words, our understanding of who we are requires the reflection gained from ongoing interaction with others in the community. Balanced psychological development suffers, however, when the dominant form of interaction in the society is extreme self-interest.

The recent emphasis on achievement in schools (e.g., standardized testing) reflects a cultural value shift toward traditionally masculine concerns with competition and reward, at the expense of reciprocity and care. Patriarchal society long benefited from the care wives and mothers provided for free. While liberal feminism increased women's opportunities in the paid work force, the movement also managed to further devalue the feminine. Feminist economist, Nancy Folbre (2001) argues that the traditionally feminine priorities of care and love are an essential but invisible part of society. Because of the moral nature of these values, however, the people who care for dependant members of society tend to have less power and less earning potential. Folbre calls them "prisoners of love." Caregivers who love the children in their charge cannot easily strike for better benefits or higher salary because the children suffer in their absence. Adding elements of emotional intelligence and relational practices to staff training offers essential coping tools to this undervalued profession, but the perspective is more than a technical fix. Adding emotional intelligence and relational practices to after-school and other caregiving environments also brings feminine priorities back into balance with the masculine for the healthy development of children and the society.

Despite the personal and communal advantages of providing warmth, care, and support for the children, few programs explicitly identify healthy relationships as the core organizing principle in program design (O'Connor, Gannett, Heenan, & Wheeler, 1998). Research on after-school programs often relies on what we refer to as "proxies" for relationship—references to particular aspects of quality that stand for adult-

child relationships. For example, relatively small adult-child ratios and group size, individual attention from caring adults, and low staff turnover mark the characteristics of good programs (Alimbhai-Brown, 1998; Dresden & Shetterly, 1997, Halpern 1992).

The concepts of relational aptitude are more easily conveyed in concrete social context and for that reason we have presented our perspective in terms of qualitative data from the Bringing Yourself to Work project and other related research on childcare and youth work. These examples offer a pathway toward self-awareness and relational aptitude in after-school settings without pre-supposing what these concepts mean for each educator and each program. Talking about the importance of connection begins this journey; feeling connection with co-workers and children sustains it. Program directors have a treasure chest of inner resources in their staff members, but it sometimes requires a little emotional "digging" to identify how these valuable feelings, experiences, and talents contribute to the group, including children.

Creating specific times and activities for reflection and sharing among staff, allows the participants to feel connection and disconnection in a structured way. In turn, this embodied experience establishes an internal barometer that can help staff in their relations with children and youth.

The goal of applying relational psychology and emotional intelligence to professional development is to foster "resonant" relationships (Brown & Gilligan, 1992) in which both participants grow. Such relationships offer the recognition, support, and acceptance necessary for developmental change. Daloz (1986) has documented ways in which mentoring relationships between adults function as "holding environments" for the growth of both mentor and mentee. We contend that adults can find a mix of support and challenge not only ininteractions with colleagues and family, but also in relationships with children. In fact, care giving poses a unique developmental challenge—to make meaningful connections with children that are marked by a sense of both responsibility and mutuality.

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Notes

1 This name, like that of other study participants, is a pseudonym to maintain confidentiality in the research.
2 Salovey and Mayer (1990) and Daniel Goleman (1995) characterize this capacity as "intelligence." They have added an emotional component to Howard Gardner's (1989) spectrum of multiple intelligences, focusing primarily on interpersonal intelligence. Salovey and Mayer list self-awareness as the first of five "domains" of emotional intelligence, upon which Goleman has expanded in two volumes. Discussions about the applications of these "domains" have become a cornerstone of innovative training strategies in business, teacher education, and now, in the education field (e.g. CASEL).
3 Psychologists working at The Wellesley College Stone Center and The Harvard Project on Women's Psychology and Girls' Development have taken the lead in developing this perspective, which argues that mutuality rather than independence characterizes health development. For in depth discussions on the rationale and applications of relational psychology see Gilligan, 1982, 1996; Jordan 1991, Jordan, Kaplan, Miller, Stiver, & Surrey, 1991; Miller, 1976.
4 In relational theory, the individual needs intimate connection to provide the mirroring and resonance necessary for healthy psychological development (Erikson, 1963; Josselson, 1992). While these theorists are referring to primary relationships, others hold that critical developmental processes can be aided or hindered by relationships in the broader community, such as those encountered in a classroom or after-school program. (Villarruel, Lerner, eds. Promoting Community-Based Programs for Socialization and Learning, Spring 1994).
5 A study examining the effectiveness of after-school programs in deterring risky behavior among adolescents found that other criteria for successful programs include skill development, the creation of challenges, and presence of "fulfilling experiences for teen participants" (Sugland, Zaslow, & Nord, 1993).
6 In a study of eight after-school programs serving urban children in Chicago, Halpern (1992) found that staff who had been with a program longer knew the children better, knew more about their home environments, and were more likely to ask questions of the children if they started skipping the program. Unfortunately, staff longevity was atypical among the programs, with over 40% of the staff having been with the programs for less than a year. This turnover was related to low staff salaries and the commonly-held view that such work represented temporary employment, rather than a career.
7 At our site visits, we collected both qualitative and quantitative data. We observed staff interacting with children, conducted focus groups with staff, and interviewed children individually. Fieldnotes incorporated observations of problematic incidents, interactions, and program structure in addition to recording how we felt as adults participating in the program for an afternoon. The human relationship standards in ASQ (Advancing School-Age Child Care Quality) provided a uniform tool for rating staff-child, child-child, staff-staff, and staff-family interactions.
8 One of the pressing issues in assessing quality in after-school programs is a high rate of staff turn-over. Educators in this field lack the professional recognition, comprehensive training, and pay incentive of public school teachers, but carry the burden of parents' and society's high expectations for program outcomes.
9 In contrast, other programs were less effective in the quality of the staff-child relationships. Another program that participated in the pilot research had a poor staff-child ratio. The sole adult in the program played basketball alone, while the school-age children ran chaotically around the basement gymnasium. The glazed look in their eyes suggested an atmosphere of disconnection rather than enjoyment with the lack of structure. The initiation of a more formal activity, however, did not help to create connection. The game required the children to stand silently in line until their turn came. A few of the children complied with the rules, but staff member yelled at the others who fidgeted and acted-out. One ten year-old girl who did not want to participate in the game sat in a corner of the gym and cried. Everyone ignored her until the program director came over and told her, "either join the group or you can stay there all day crying." Even though this director earlier claimed that he loved working with kids, he clearly did not work *with* them. No one asked the girl why she was upset or helped her learn to express her feelings more effectively.
10 To be effective, a training model for after-school childcare professionals need to address the challenge of the elusive nature of emotion. Jean Baker Miller (1986:2-3) describes five "good things" that happen in relationships where there is psychological growth happening for both people involved: (1) each person feels a greater sense of "zest" (vitality, energy); (2) each person feels more able to act and does act; (3) each person has a more accurate picture of her/himself and the other person; (4) each person feels a greater sense of worth; and (5) each person feels more connected to the other person(s) and feels a greater motivation for connections with other people beyond those in the specific relationship.

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